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AUTHOR Kay, Alan A.
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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the use of student journals in a community college literature course as a technique to analyze student responses to literary works. Journal statements collected from 26 students in two classes were evaluated and assigned to the following categories: self and society; class discussion and activity; class discussion, activity, and self; readings; readings and meaning; readings and self; and imaginative writing. Because the journals required regular, almost daily, writing, they encouraged responsibility, close reading of texts, and attentiveness in class discussion. In addition, entries revealed that the teacher's attitude and presentation of material, as well as comments written in the journals, helped students to define their personal and social roles. (Author/KS)

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STUDENT JOURNALS AND LITERARY RESPONSES AT THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE LEVEL

Dr. Alan A. Kay

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The idea to use journals to record student literary responses grew out of my dissatisfaction several years ago with my approach to literature in the classroom. As an instructor in the department of Communication Arts and Skills at New York City Community College, I suffered from what

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Daniel N. Fader and Elton B. McNeil called a "fatal distraction." The child *is*," Fader and McNeil wrote. We've never managed to find out *who* or *what* he is because we've been fatally distracted by who we are and what *we* want him to be."[1]

I approached the teaching of literature as it had been approached when I was an undergraduate, within a teacher-structured historical, biographical, and critical framework. The teacher's objective was to have the student read the literature within such a framework to discover what the writer was trying to say to the reader rather than what the writer was actually saying to the reader. If the writer's meaning was missed, the teacher made it evident. What the reader brought to the literature was either de-emphasized or ignored.

I asked myself whether I had approached the literary experience as a "collaboration between the writer's artful vision and the reader's sense of life."[2]

As a teacher of community college students I considered education a practical means to secure a job and earn a living. Though most students register for a literature course at New York City Community College to fulfill a degree requirement, they enter class thinking that literary history, biography, and criticism will not make them better nurses or better automotive mechanics and they reject such approaches. I recognized that they had needs perhaps not fulfilled in their career courses· needs to explore and share

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1 Daniel N. Fader and Elton B. McNeil, *Hooked on Books: Program and Proof*, New York: Berkeley Publishing Co., 1968, 2.

2 Ralph Ellison, *Shadow and Act*, New York· The New American Library, 1964, xviii.

their lives with others.

Though I sought to encourage the student's personal response to literature my academic training kept getting in the way. To resolve this discrepancy I began to allow class discussions to be guided by the students. Yet, on a mid-semester examination I asked content-oriented questions which denied students the opportunity to express a personal reaction to literature. In an attempt at reform, I assigned reaction papers for each reading; yet, these were again analytical. However, because they were written within days of each other, they allowed students to compare and contrast what they were reading at the time to what they had read, offering continuity to their responses. That the student's personal sense of the work was absent suggested that part of the process was missing: that part between sharing ideas in class and writing reaction papers; that is, when they were reflecting privately on the work.

It was brought to my attention that journals could offer the continuity of reaction papers and fill the gaps between them. Engagement with literature offers the student the opportunity to explore his personal values and the values of others; to share the order or disorder of his own life with lives in literature; to discover he is not alone with his joy and pain; and as he explores, shares, and discovers, he may strengthen his capacity to deal effectively with himself and his world. The journal may be a means of encouraging this exploration, sharing, and discovering, as well as a means by which the teacher begins to know his students as people.

I introduced the journal to my classes through a one-page handout, distributed on the first day of class.

You will purchase a hardbound notebook to use for a journal to record your reactions to each assigned reading and to each class discussion. The journal must be brought to class each day.

You will be expected to make an entry in your journal following each reading assignment at home and after each class meeting, and accurately date each entry. Five to ten minutes will be given before the end of most class meetings to begin your entry for that class. While the entries are not limited to reactions to assigned readings or to class discussion--both to the remarks made by yourself and other students, as well as remarks made by me--you will be expected to use either as the impetus for each entry.

It is expected that the entries will be primarily expository. But your journals should also be a place for your own creative expression in prose, poetry, drama or drawing. Also, use the journal to ask questions, to comment on class routines, and to reflect on your own learning and achievement.

Your journals will be collected at least three times during the semester. Since the journals will be brought to each class meeting, prior notice for journal collection will not be given.

I will comment on each entry. My written comments will indicate that your entry has been read and your expressed thoughts and feelings understood. I will ask questions raised by your remarks to stimulate additional thought. You may respond to these questions in later entries.

No grade will be assigned until the end of the semester when we will mutually evaluate your journal with regard to your keeping to the assigned schedule of entries and to the learning that has taken place. Each journal will be confidential between the student and the teacher; between you and me.

At the conclusion of the semester I asked each student to allow me to keep his journal for further analysis. I was looking for and attempting to examine, an alternative strategy for the teaching of literature in an inner-city two-year college. My analysis was to include a description and evaluation of the student journal as a teaching and learning tool in a community college literature course.

My first task was to sort out the journal entries. I read studies in literary response of Squire,[1] Purves,[2] and Wilson.[3]

Squire and Purves focus on the literary work and on the isolated literary response. Their categories were inappropriate for my analysis because I sought to examine written responses not only to the literary work, but to class discussion, routines, and teaching, and to a student's evaluation of his learning and achievement, and to examine creative expression as this may contribute to a student's response to literature. Thus, there was the need for categories of response which encompassed the variety of journal responses I had asked for. Wilson examines the written responses of college freshmen to three novels, using the Squire categories. He codes responses written before and after class discussion but students are not expected to respond to class routines, teaching, to write creatively, or evaluate their own learning.

In all three studies, responses were either written or recorded within a class setting, whereas, except for the five or ten minutes allotted before the end of each class for beginning a response, students keeping journals wrote their responses outside of class where length of time to write an entry was not a factor. Categories

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[1]James R. Squire, The Response of Adolescents While Reading Four Short Stories, Research Report No. 2, Champaign, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1964.

[2]Alan C. Purves and Victoria Rippere, Elements of Writing About a Literary Work: A Study of Response to Literature, Research Report No. 9, Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1968.

[3]James R. Wilson, Responses of College Freshmen to Three Novels, Research Report No. 7, Champaign, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1966.

had to consider, then, the various settings in which a response may have been written. For these reasons I found the studies in literary response of Squire, Purves, and Wilson unsuitable to the design for journals and new ones needed to be developed.

After several revisions the following set of categories were established:

Category 1[1]

Self and society. Responses here were concerned with personal worth and achievement, reflections on learning, the school, attendance, or general comments about self.

The following definitions apply to responses coded category 1: (a) personal worth: self-evaluation or judgment of qualities of mind and character, or usefulness or importance of oneself, to others, to the world; (b) achievement: self-evaluation or judgment of accomplishment; (c) learning: the act or process of acquiring knowledge; (d) school: pertaining to structure, administration, or curricula; (e) attendance: regarding presence in or absence from class; (f) general comments about self: pertaining to private matters of self, family or relationships with others.

Categories 2 and 3

Categories 2 and 3 complement each other and are presented together.

Category 2: Class discussion and activity. Responses here were those in which the student reported, without

[1]Students' names were alphabetized within each class and each assigned a letter. Five dashes replace a student's name within an entry. Spelling, usage, grammar and syntax remain as student used them.

interpretation or evaluation, the subject of class discussion, or identified what was said in class by himself, other students, or teacher, or quoted from the readings; also included here were statements referring to class activity and course requirements, including writing a journal.

Category 3: Class discussion and activity, and self.

These were responses in which the student interpreted or evaluated the subject of class discussion, or what was said by himself, other students, or teacher; also included here were statements of interpretation or evaluation referring to class activity, teaching, and course requirements, including writing a journal.

Category 4: Readings.

Responses here were those in which the student stated title, identified genre, or re-told, summarized, or quoted from a literary work, or made statements about the author's life or writing style; also included were statements indicating student had read work or had not completed the reading.

Category 5: Readings and meaning.

Responses here were those in which the student attempted to interpret or evaluate the literary work without relating the work to his own life; also included were statements or questions indicating understanding or lack of understanding of a work, and comparisons with other works. Finally, coded here were statements written in response to teacher's comments in the journal as they pertained to the readings.

Category 6: Readings and self.

These were responses in which the student related or evaluated literary character, events, or themes to his own life or society in which he lives.

Following is an analysis of one student's journal.

My analysis of O's journal begins with her response to my second reading of her journal; her 29th entry in a series of 35.

> I also got my journal back and was glad about the results. I'm glad that my journal is no longer and exercise but a learning tool. I found myself looking back a couple of times to read over the comments. I learned from those comments. They really add to this journal. It's almost as if a conversion is going on when you read it. In the beginning I must admit it really was a pressure for me to write the journal but now i enjoy it. Some of my thoughts on life etc. have never been accepted by people when i write them down it makes me feel better. I'm still in search for myself and I really find that this class will really help me a little faster. I guess I've learned to interpret the philosophies and inner meanings of some of the books we've read to my own. I never thought I would get so much out of an English class. Usually your attitude is well English all you do is read and get the main idea of what is going on. But this is the first--no kidding--English class that I truly got something more out of it. I just wish that other English (or even any other subject) classes can be instructed or taught the way ours is. I learned so much and my ideas on life and other people have changed because I know more. Thank you.[1]

This entry divides into three parts, each one focusing on one or more aspects of my analysis. All the statements in the entry are coded 3 as they are responses to keeping a journal and to class activity.

Part I

> I also got my journal back and was glad about the results./3 I'm glad that my journal is no longer and exercise but a learning tool./3 I found myself looking back a couple of

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> times to read over the comments./3 I learned from those comments./3 They really add to this journal./3 It's almost as if a conversion is going on when you read it./3

The first part raises the following questions: 1) what was the substance of my written comments and do her entries reveal what she has learned from them?; 2) what is the contrast between the journal as an "exercise" in writing and as a "learning tool"? In presenting the journal to the class, I asked my students to consider it a tool for learning and expressed hope that through the journal and class discussion the course would be a learning experience for them. I did not discuss "learning tool" or "learning experience" further, expecting that their meanings would become evident as the course progressed. O's comments here were a direct response to those early remakrs and to a statement I wrote after my second reading of her journal: "Your journal has begun to be more than an exercise; it's a learning experience." That O is repeating my words does not prejudice the question I am exploring now; rather, it clarifies my aims because it has given us a controlling idea to which we may both relate. I am observing the journals as learning tools, but such a term does not have a common value. Its importance is not in whether a student repeats my usage, but in whether or not there is evidence that her journal has become an instrument for her learning. This part of entry 29 also raises the following question: What does the student mean when she states that the reading of her journal reveals that a "conversion is going on," and what is the nature of that conversion?

In the context of her preceding statements, it would be understandable if instead of "conversion" O had written "conversation,"

as student entries and my responses to them amount to a written conversation. Perhaps she did mean to write "conversation." Journals do illustrate that teacher and student are conversing, albeit in writing, and the word "conversation" would be appropriate to characterize this relationship. If however, the word is considered as written, as it will be, it is critical to the purpose of my analysis which seeks to examine, in part, the journal as a learning tool. To learn is to grow and change, as in a conversion.

Part 2

> In the beginning I must admit it really was a pressure for me to write the journal but now i enjoy it./3 Some of my thoughts on life etc. have never been accepted by people and when i write them down it makes me feel better./3 I'm still in search for myself and I really find that this class will really help me a little faster./3 I guess I've learned to interpret the philosophies and inner meanings of some of the books we've read to my own./3

The second part also raises the following questions: 1) what are the "pressures" in keeping a journal and are they reflected in O's entries?; 2) do O's entries show her overcoming these pressures and do they reflect her enjoyment in keeping a journal?; 3) do my comments reveal an acceptance of her ideas?; 4) do her entries illustrate that the course has aided in her "search" for self, and how is this shown?; 5) do her entries reveal that she has "learned to interpret the philosophies and inner meanings of some of the books we've read" to her own?; and what does O mean by "philosophy" and "inner meanings"?

Part 3

> I never thought I would get so much out of an English class./3 Usually your attitude is well English all you do is read and get the main idea of what is going on./3 But this is the first--no kidding--English class that I truly get something more out

> of it./3 I just wish that other English (or even any other subject) classes can be instructed or taught the way ours is./3 I learned so much and my ideas on life and other people have changed because I know more./3 Thank you./3

The third part reveals that the course has allowed O to explore beyond the "main idea of what is going on." This statement raises the following questions: 1) what does O mean by the "main idea of what is going on," and do her entries reveal this further exploration?; 2) do her entries reveal what she has learned that has changed her ideas on "life and other people"?

In sum, the entry reveals a wide range of concerns to which this project addresses itself: 1) the procedures and pressures of keeping journals; the distinction between the journal as an exercise in writing and as a learning tool; the substance of my written comments, for example, whether they show acceptance of student ideas and the extent to which this is important to the student; what the student has learned from my comments and from the continuity of the journal experience, and how these are evidenced; 2) what the journal reveals about a student's reactions to literature, for example, how they aid a student to explore "beyond the main idea" of a literary work and in identifying with aspects of a work; 3) how the journal reveals the student's search for selfhood.

Because the entry comes near the end of the semester I use it as a context within which to describe, analyze, and evaluate the journal as a teaching and learning tool in a community college literature course.

O wrote in her first entry:[1]

(Would you take some time later in your journal to discuss this?)

I can say that this class to me will be a total experience in literature./3 And i think i will learn much more without the pressure of having tests and exams./3 This way you really want to devote yourself to appreciate literature./3 And it looks like if your having trouble trying to interpret all author's writing, the class will help you out./3

(What was your reaction to the readings? to writing a journal?)

Three questions emerge from this initial entry: 1) What does O mean by "total experience"?; 2) What are the "pressures" created by "tests and exams" and how does the journal relieve those pressures? 3) What does O mean by "appreciate literature"? She appears willing to depend upon the class, as well as on me, to aid her in "interpreting" writings that may be difficult. The "total experience" may be one which combines both,

[1]Entries are triple-spaced when accompanied by my comments which are bracketed to the left. Otherwise, entries are single-spaced.

her own ideas and those shared by others in class. Since the journal was presented to her as an integral part of the course experience perhaps writing about the literature is also part of this experience.

O's second entry, a home response to Emerson's "The American Scholar" follows:

> Emerson uses philosophy throughout the essay./5 Nature and the soul of Man seem to be a source, largely ignored by society, not intentionally but conditionally. /5 Man is of one soul and mentally apt to percieve any occupation./5 if he chooses the job of a farmer, the job to the farmer is just work, it is never thought out to be a meaningful internal experience./5 Money is always in mind as one works instead of the true meaning./5

[Maybe intentionally conditionally?]

[Meaning?]

[What is the true meaning?]

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[Maybe intentionally conditionally?]

[Meaning?]

[What is the true meaning?]

People use some what of the same technique towards Nature./5 It should be interpreted as Emerson says "beauty is the beauty of its own mind."/4 I read this essay many times and though my interpretation may be wrong, it made me think of things that i overlooked before./6 i compared it to the way i think./6

[I'm not sure I understand your understanding of this line; what relationship does Emerson make between man, man's nature, and man's environment?]

[Meaning?]

O's final two statements offer additional clues to her meanings of "total experience" and "appreciate literature." Perhaps "appreciate literature" means being given the opportunity to compare a work to the way she thinks, without fear of rejection should she "misinterpret." Comparing a work to the way she thinks may also explain what O means by exploring "beyond the main idea of what is going on," a concept she introduced in her 29th entry which began this analysis. Discovering through this exploration that a work reflects her own thoughts may be part of that "total [literary] experience." Though her interpretation of "what is going on"

may be wrong, if a work makes her think of "things" she "overlooked before" she has gained by reading. Perhaps "tests and exams" create pressures because they do not allow for self-exploration and therefore do not offer an opportunity to "appreciate literature."

O was absent for the first class discussion of "The American Scholar." Her third entry was written one week later. Perhaps writing regularly in her journal was becoming a chore, though it had only just begun.

The class analysed Emerson's "American Scholar" today./2 It was very confusing/3 and had taken some time to come up with a conclusion./3 The conclusion was based on two statements--1 something called "soul"--which is the basis of unity for all people./2 2--matter mind of thought--which is the basis for unity of all people./2 This was

[What conclusion are we, or you, seeking?]

[Again, what is this conclusion?]

[How does Emerson define "soul"? Can you accept his definition for yourself?]

established as the reasoning factor./2 Then Emerson brought out mind that is used and mind that is not used./2 Then questions like--confidence--where does it come from?/2 Unless we believe in ourselves we cannot [Yes!] believe in our mind./2

My comments continued:

> [You were absent on 2-15, but why are there no entries for eight days? There were readings in Emerson you might have done and responded to. Did you divorce yourself totally from the literature all that time? What happened to that "total experience" in literature you were writing about? Where are your responses to "Each and All,""The Rhodora," "Hamatreya," "Self-Reliance," and the journals? You're not doing all the reading.]

O's fourth entry, also a response to class discussion, came eight days later, again following an absence.

I found the class today as a whole to be very boring./3 It seems that one point

[Were you even too bored to respond to the "perfect whole"? Do you write your entries during class? Why not reflect upon what happens in class and write an entry sometime after leaving class?]

(simple pt) is stressed so many times./3 I can't wait to get finished with Emerson. /3 Today's talk evolved around the "perfect whole."/2 Which is the cosmic ego, total being./2 And how an individual's philosophy is not affected (or should not be affected) by any external stimulus./2

I was dissatisfied with O's work. Her last two entries did not evidence that "appreciation of literature" or "total experience" she wrote about in her first entry. She appeared to be depending solely upon the class to help her understand the literature and the class was not meeting what now seemed to me to be a demand rather than an expectation. These entries also illustrated writing the journal as an exercise rather than using it as a learning tool. She was making no effort to explore beyond the "main idea of what [was] going on" and wrote occasionally (two

entries in eight days) perhaps in an attempt to satisfy the course requirement that she do. My disappointment resulted in comments which were accusatory and pedantic. Only in a one-word response, to her final statement in entry 3, did I show any acceptance of her work; and that was to a statement I had made in class that she recorded. Considering her second entry, where she related, in part, to Emerson, it puzzled me that in her third and fourth entries it appeared that she had not read his essay. Where was she heading?

O neglected to write a home response to The Scarlet Letter prior to discussing the novel in class, and her fifth entry was more a summary of class activities than a response to them. Her final statement reveals that she had only begun to read the work when it should have been read in its entirety at this date.

> We had an introduction to the Scarlet Letter today./2 The class was interesting and gave some insight to how to read and understand Hawthorne's Scarlet Letter./3 The incident of the rose bush, what its existance pertained to--natural or imaginary facts./2 Hawthorne wants you to read the story with a concept to accept the real and the unreal (actual and imaginary in the story/2 We also discussed the importance of the introduction (The Custom House)./2 In reading the story and accepting the unrealness--the author does not want you to accept the original imaginary happening but accept the characters interpretation of it./2 The book doen't look easy but not too hard to comprehend./3

In her sixth entry, also a response to class discussion, O continues to reveal her dissatisfaction

with the class.

Today we talked in class about Hester and if she sinned; sinned alone and if she felt that she did in fact sin at all./2 I really enjoyed the discussion today but i noticed that the class doesn't seem too enthused with it./3 Maybe its the books or something./3 I myself sometimes find it very boring in class./3 It just seems that everyone just sits there and only one or two participate. / 3 Maybe its just an attitude I'm coping./3

[What do you think?]

[I cannot help but return to your first entry; it held so much promise; what's happening?]

O reacted to class discussion of the novel with one statement expressing only the "main idea of what [was] going on." In her final statement she appears to

have come to some realization concerning her role as a student. To this point her own participation had been infrequent and her journal entries unsatisfying. While there was no indication here that she was prepared to become verbal in class, her final statement does suggest that a re-evaluation of her own role was occurring, if we read that last word as "copping." Apparently, O realized that she could no longer depend upon the class to read for her, which was what appeared to be happening. She was blaming the class for her own failure to do the work.

At this stage O had written six entries, five based on class discussion. She went on to write nine more entries during the remainder of the first half of the semester, six of them home responses. This change suggests that she was beginning to take the burden of learning upon herself, and illustrates the conversion she writes about later.

Wanting to finish reading The Scarlet Letter before the next class meeting, O wrote three consecutive entries reacting to the novel. Entries nine through 15 were undated. Entry seven follows.

> I'm almost finished with the book now/4 and i'm enjoying it so far but have some criticisms./5 I think the author shouldn't have dragged out each part or incident./5 There were some that had to be said again and again--The Scarlet Letter and its contenders./5 But when he writes up an incident he can't just plain out say what is

> happening, but put alot of (to me) useless phrases that i have to skip over so i don't loose the intensity of the incident./5 It seems that i can't put it down to see what happens at the end./5

The entry illustrates again that O's dissatisfaction with the class resulted, in large measure, from her own failure to read the literature; class discussion could not substitute for her own reading of the work. O's next entry follows.

> Well i have about 50 more pages to go/4 and thought it was about time that Hester and Arthur met. /5 I thought i would find this happen on the last page the rate this book is going./5 I like the way Hawthorne really puts a mystifying illusion on the personality and characteristics of Pearl./5 It makes you almost believe all the theories of her./5 The way he puts these

[Perhaps you might take more time with your journal. Take notes in class and while you're reading, but don't let the notes stand alone for your entry. Will you recall the moment when you look back on these notes? Think about them and then write your entry' the journal may be a tool for learning and reflecting on your learning; do you think you are using it for these purposes?]

theories in effect whenever she does something./5 ex-- when she didn't cross the stream in the forest--he points out that it might be because elves do not cross rivers or streams./5 The symbolism in this story is incredible./5 The Scarlet Letter for one held so much value to the story./5 Then you can relate how society effects a person even if the person thinks she or he has not sinned./5

In retrospect, my comments seemed to have ignored the thrust of O's response. It was an attempt to evaluate and interpret the work though her emphasis was on form. My comments ignored this emphasis and instead of raising questions concerning her need to focus on

form, reflected my dissatisfaction with what I considered to be note-taking. My coding of the statements indicate that there was more to the entry than I initially reacted to. O began her entry remarking about the novel's structure as it pertained to the relationship between Arthur and Hester. Suddenly her statements jumped to Pearl, to Hawthorne's use of symbolism and finally, to the effects of society on the person. I was remiss in not recognizing in her remarks an attempt to explore beyond the "main idea," now clearly indicated in her final statement.

In her ninth entry, O focused on the reader's supplements inserted into her editions of The Scarlet Letter and Billy Budd, both of which she found helpful guides. Her tenth entry, and her fourth consecutive home response, was a reaction to Billy Budd.

> Started to read Billy Budd/4 and found it so far very boring./5 It seems that when i finally get into what he's saying, he goes off on a turf and loses my interest completely./5 He seems to do

this alot./5 The plot is very simple and not too hard to follow./5 Billy Budd is a very handsome man./4 He is strong physically but innocent in his character./4 He gives in easily./4 Melville uses the concept of foreshadowing right at the beginning./5 Billy Budd in life accepts thing and people as they are./5 He doesn't understand irony./5 Claggart seems to be the main evil force in the story./5 He antagonizes Billy and really envies him of his strength and good looks./5 When things appear to be different to Billy than what he

[Can innocence be an evil? Then maybe Billy Budd himself is evil.]

originally thought of at first, he begins the impulse of stuttering./5 Billy had to leave his ship "Rights of Man" to the ship "Indomitable./4 These two names of the ships show the presence of symbolism whereas Billy leaves his rights of being a man and enters the Indominable./5

[Can too rigid adherence to law be an evil? when it's at the expense of individual right? Then maybe Vere is evil?]

Though most of the statements are coded 5 and O is attempting to explore beyond the "main idea," she does not explore enough. This may be the reason she finds, as she begins to read the work, that it bores her. My comments were an attempt to help her recognize this. I might have also asked her to discuss the significance to the story of such terms as foreshadowing, irony and symbolism.

O's 11th entry was another response to Billy Budd and evidences a stance that may have significant bearing on her reactions to other works: prejudgment.

I finished the book/4 and found that i couldn't put it down until i did so./5 I found that i did really like the book./5 When i first started the book i was all full of criticism and din't enjoy reading it, but i soon became involved in the book and couldn't put it down./5

O's next entry was her 12th.

Today in class, i learned how the appreciation of such works we are reading are reached through learning and giving of your own knowledge./2 This really made me think twice and i'm sure will help me appreciate books alot more./3 The discussion was also based upon the main theme of the book./2 Good and Evil, Law and Morality, and Law and Law./2 We also strayed onto the subject of Hester Prynne and if she would have felt the

[Do you recall our discussion of the literary experience as the interaction between the reader and the text?]

same way if society had not punished her./2 I said yes because Hester sinned against herself and it would make no difference if society agreed or disagreed with her./3 I enjoyed todays class./3

[Why? I'm interested in knowing; your response might help me with other class meetings.]

O enjoyed the day's discussion, as she did the following meeting where the Melville nouvella was discussed, because she was participating, "giving of herself." She concluded her next entry, her 13th, writing: "I really liked the class today because it wasn't boring and we were all sharing our opinions." It seems odd that O would write that it is not until this point that she realized that "appreciation of literature" is reached through interaction between work, teacher, and class (learning) and student (giving of your own knowledge) when this is what she sought all along.

Her following two entries, however, were disappointing. The first, a home response to Walt Whitman's "Song of Myself," appeared more as a need to write

"something," than reaction to the poem. My single comment indicated disappointment and some bitterness. Her dependence, once again, on the class was disturbing because it showed that she again was willing to be lax with her own responsibility. Her 14th entry follows.

> I started reading Walt Whitman today/4 and could only grasp certain parts./5 When reading "Song of Myself" I find that i might have to read it twice to get the meaning of it./5 I liked certain passages very much./5 I think that maybe the class discussions will help me out./3

[Is this all the reading was worth to you?]

O's 15th entry, based on class discussion, was her last entry for the first half of the semester, and the last one before my first reading of her journal. Again, several general comments were all she offered.

> The discussion in class today helped me out in reading Song of Myself./3 I enjoy Whitman's writing the more I read and understand it./3 The talk in class was about the theme of Song of Myself which

> was the acceptance of life./2 I hope we can spend a couple more days on Whitman./3

My comments to her, following my first reading of her journal were brief and angry.

> [Maybe now is the time to re-read your initial entry for yourself. In your journal you talk to me and your entries are telling me that the "total experience" you hoped would be this course hasn't happened. Would you tell me why?]

My remarks ignored the changes in O's reactions to literature and to her use of the journal, which were surfacing, though slowly. A more careful re-reading before writing my comments would have resulted, I think, in a more meaningful response, I might have stressed the positive aspects of her work; but her last two entries were disappointing and she neglected to respond to The Narratives of the Life of Frederick Douglass as well as absent herself on the one day that work was discussed.

O began the course with great expectations. She looked forward to a "total [literary] experience" which her entries suggested is the interaction in class among herself, other readers and the literature. The interaction begins with her own exploration in the journal which allows her to go beyond the "main idea of what is going on"; unlike a narrowly-defined test or examination which by its nature inhibits self-exploration through literature. O's excitement appeared to wear off following her second entry, and for a period of eight days,

between February 11 and 19, she wrote only two entries, both expressing her dissatisfaction with class; after all, it was the class she was depending upon more than perhaps either of us expected. O's next two entries revealed this dependence upon class and they concluded the first part of the first semester half.

During the second part of the first half of the semester O wrote nine entries, six of which were home responses, evidencing her recognition that class discussion could not substitute for her own reading of the literature. Her final two entries for the first half of the semester continued to reveal the pressures of writing a journal; and that O neglected the final reading for that period, as well as the final class meeting, may have resulted from her need to escape additional pressure. These entries do not support her realization that learning is "giving of your own knowledge," a thought expressed in her 12th entry. At this point, O's direction was uncertain.

An overview of her journal over the course of the entire semester reveals a contrast between halves that suggests the direction O eventually decided upon. (Table 17.)

Table 17

Semester Overview: Class 1-O

	H	C	1	2	3	4	5	6	TS	7
First Half Feb. 4- Mar. 17	7	8	2	26	24	12	42	2	108	None
Second Half Mar. 18- May 6	11	9	10	33	120	6	58	11	238	None

During the first half of the semester there were 16 class meetings and 10 separate reading assignments. During the second half, there were 13 class meetings and five separate reading assignments. There were increases in both categories of entries as well as in total statements, with the largest increase in category 3. Apparently, O continued to focus on the class as the place to do much of her exploration, but the number of category 3 statements evidences her determination not merely to report what happens but to be a part of what happens through her own interpretation and evaluation.

The semester may also be divided into periods according to my reading of O's journal. My first reading coincided with the end of the first semester half. (Table 18.)

Table 18

Before and After First Journal Reading: Class 1-O

	H	C	1	2	3	4	5	6	TS	7
Before Teacher Reading	7	8	2	26	24	12	42	2	108	None
After First Reading Mar. 14	6	7	3	27	87	5	39	6	167	None

From March 18 through April 18, the last entry before my second reading of O's journal, there were nine class meetings and three separate reading assignments compared with 16 meetings and 11 assignments between February 4 and March 14, the period before my first reading of her journal. As the table shows, O wrote more statements after my first reading of her journal than before, even though there were fewer meetings and fewer separate readings. The increase in category 3 statements illustrates again her focus on class discussion.

O's first entry following my first reading of her journal, number 16, was a response to my comments.

> I just finished reading over your comments and have some comments to say myself./3 This is my first journal ever attempted and thought i was interpreting myself in the right way./3 I'll admit this, it's

> hard to write about thoughts that are in your head which need to be explained on paper./3 I tried to write what i thought to be in order but I guess they didn't meet your requirements./3 I agree with most of your comments but it did bring me down a little to see that i was doing it wrong./3 But on some entries your giving me suggestions of what to write or explain./3 If they didn't seem important to me at the time or occured to me it would be then, as if you were telling me the subject and topic to write on./3 I'll try better to explicate my thoughts./3 Some suggestions gave me a way I can put down better entries./3

The entry, whose first statement suggests the conversational flavor of the journal, is significant for what it reveals about the relationship between student and teacher. It is apparent that the teacher's attitude helps to define the student's role. Unless the teacher is secure in what he is doing, and confident and clear in his objectives, he cannot expect the same of his students. O's doubt as to my expectations results in her uncertainty as to what her role ought to be. Though my intention was for my written comments to show understanding of a student's reactions, as well as to stimulate additional thought, I did not succeed fully in making my intentions clear. Perhaps they were not clear enough to me. The bitterness that crept into an earlier response to one of O's entries suggests that I was asking more from O than my objectives for the journal evidenced. For O to write that she was not responding to the literature in the "right way" acknowledges this misunderstanding; this is contrary to

my approach to literature: there is not a right or wrong way of responding to an imaginative work. That I was not faithful to my own thoughts is illustrated early in my response to O's second entry. My earlier analysis suggests the entry's importance in terms of what it reveals about O's meanings of "total [literary] experience" and "appreciate literature." My comments ignore these. They are, instead, questions which imply that there are gaps in the response that weaken it and result in O not interpreting in the "right way." But O was interpreting and evaluating. She was doing, then, what she wrote in her 12th entry she did not learn she should be doing until late in the first half of the semester.

> Today in class, i learned how the appreciation of such works we are reading are reached through learning and giving of your own knowledge./2 This really made me think twice and i'm sure will help me appreciate books alot more./3

It was a concept O was unaware of until I spoke of it in class because it was not reflected in my comments. In her second entry O was giving of herself and my remarks should have indicated that. For example, my final comment to that entry should have first indicated my understanding of O's statement of identification with Emerson as her interaction with the essay, and accepted that as the initial phase of the literary experience. Then I could have asked her to shape that identification with specific reference to the essay.

Without that initial acknowledgement in my comments O should be confused and perhaps discouraged.

In reviewing my responses during the first half of the semester, I find that they fall into two areas: questions to O's reactions and comments on her neglect to write regularly. Perhaps these latter remarks were too harsh. I scolded O for failing to live up to her intentions, as revealed in her first entry. I did not recognize my own lack of success in living up to my own. Her expectations were based on my intentions. Her uncertainty and disappointment were inevitable.

O's second entry for the last half of the semester shows a change in her own responses as well as in my comments.

> We are now dealing with the book "Death of a hired Salesman"/2 I was absent on Friday/1 so i didn't know this book was next but thought it was Great Gatsby./2 So i wasn't informed and didn't start reading it./2 But today's talk helped me

imagine the feeling or theme of the play./3 Alan talked about the position of the salesman and an experience he had when he opened the door and there was a salesman who looked as if confidence had failed him./2 And he tried to explain how he felt towards the man but couldn't./2 It might be guilt or it might be pity for the salesman./2 We also talked about bums--the nature of them and their existence./2 Well i just wanted to hear what everyone was saying of how he interpreted a bum as./3 And i was very disappointed./3 I know now

[I still don't know what it was--it was one of those experiences when words do not come easy.]

that i should have spoken up and gave my view which was completely opposite./3 Alan wanted a definition of what was a successful salesman was./2 And right away everyone said by how much he sells, by the amount of money he makes./2 Why does it always have to be how much money he makes to be successful./3 To me if the person is happy making $34 a week and satified with it, to me he is successful./3 Age doesn't matter either./3 I heard someone say today that "If your 32 and you haven't found yourself your a bum./2

[Yes, I agree! Like the invisible man we let others define who we are.]

[Most people spend their entire lives searching for themselves. I'm 30 and I haven't found myself yet. I love teaching and writing but I am not content with either; why? I suppose I'll never know why. Perhaps that's what makes living sweet sorrow.]

Now by finding themselves she probably meant a JOB!/3 I personally feel that for some people it might take their whole life time to find themselves./3 I know i'm still searching/1--and just by getting a job and making money won't end the search./3

[Does this sadden you? It does me, but ironically this is what makes life exciting.]

O's admission that she should have openly expressed her view in class is perhaps her recognition that the purpose of class discussion is to share, not only to receive. She wrote in her first entry: "And it looks like if your having trouble trying to interpret all author's writing the class will help you out." Here, she realizes that it is her role as well to "help out." By sharing her views she not only becomes more confident in them but she aids others in exploring their own. This, in effect, is my intention in commenting on reactions in journals.

The substance and tone of my comments changed. Perhaps they are more positive and encouraging because

I recognized a change in the student. Perhaps we more clearly understand our own roles and each other's. O's category 3 statements here, unlike the majority of those during the first semester half, relate to discussion of the literature and are not criticisms of the class. Such criticism is not unwelcome, but it is not a substitute for reaction to discussions of the readings.

O's next entry, her 18th, was written on a day when there was no class meeting. Apparently she read Death of a Salesman through and wanted to express additional thoughts. In entry 16 she had written: "It's hard to write about thoughts that are in your head which need to be explained on paper." The thoughts expressed in entry 18 seem to be of that nature, but O succeeded in expressing them clearly. My remarks show acceptance and support.

I really liked this play./5 It brings out how some people live in a daydream world--a world of illusion and fantasy./5 Willy Loman has hopes for his future and has dreams constantly for the future and life of his sons./4

[Isn't living an illusion as Hawthorne suggested in his theory of romance?; we cannot separate the real from the imaginary.]

> This illusion is apparent
>
> throughout the whole play./5

From this point O's journal was maintained almost regularly. Though she did not respond to two class discussions for which she was present, on one of those dates she wrote a home response to the reading. She was absent for two class meetings, but on one of those days she wrote about keeping a journal. For The Great Gatsby, Invisible Man, and Sheila Levine is Dead and Living in New York, O wrote responses before class. That she was eager to keep the journal regularly, as well as to keep up with the readings, is illustrated by the fact that she wrote three entries during the Spring recess. During the 12th week of the semester, when regular classes were not held, O wrote five home responses: one to writing a journal; three to the Gail Parent novel, and one expressing her disappointment at the cancellation of class.

O's 19th entry, a response to class discussion of the Arthur Miller play follows.

> We acted out the play today and
>
> i found that in acting the play
>
> out i could find out how the
>
> character really feels and got

more out of the play then just reading it to myself/3 I enjoyed today's class and got more out of the play./3 I guess a person can relate more to what they can actually see & hear than what they read./3

[Is this what we ought to be doing with drama? Ought we read more plays? Which ones? What has been your background in drama?]

O suggests that reading the play aloud in class is a way of exploring beyond the "main idea of what is going on." In her next entry O continues to explore her reactions to this experience with drama. Acting gives her the opportunity to find out how a character "feels," and this, together with understanding a character's actions and words, is part of her "total [literary] experience." In that entry O still focuses on discussion of the reading and again recognizes the class as a place for sharing.

----- made a point that when acting the part of Willy he found that when he read certain parts he couldn't remember them

when he read it without acting./2 This makes you feel the part of the character and why he thinks this way./2 More discussions seem to come about after we act out the play./3 I like the way we are doing the play./3 We also talked about how Biff seems to be the most content and successful person in the whole story./2 Even though he doesn't make alot of money he knows what he wants and is doing something about it/2 The reason why he comes home is get his father's approval or love./2 He loves his father very much./2 I'm not trying to

[Discontented only because he is searching for his father's acceptance. Is this true of most children? Do parents search for their children's acceptance as well?]

[Yes! And I wish more people in class had been sensitive enough to recognize this.]

be critical but I find in class that ----- when giving an answer or point of view seems to want to impress people with her vocabulary rather than the point that she wants to make./3 She likes to be heard./3 I remember when she had to read the newspaper article on streaking/3 and after reading it everyone's attitude was--So?/3 It might sound critical but this is the impression I get./3 But then again some of her reactions do bring about some interesting debates on which the class responds emphatically./3

[She's sharing with us and how valuable that is when there is so little sharing in our world. She needs acceptance too; needs a chance to express herself.]

O's ~~first~~ 21st entry, a reaction to writing a journal,

suggests her continued concern with her class work and with the journal.

> In coming back to the writing of a journal I feel that it will be a different technique of learning and I found out that i did not find the write way of writing till you checked it out./3 I found after I read the entries I made in very beginning that I am simply summarizing what I have read instead of the ideas I had./3 I feel that without tests and with a journal the learning you want to receive is all up to you./3 You see with tests you are pressured into studying just the main important facts instead of talking about ideas and personal view points./3 I find that I am learning more and want to make the journal a tool for my learning./3 I know I'll get better in my entries as I go along./3 I guess I'm just not used to it./3 My reactions at first to the readings was very unfavorable./3 But as i did read them i found that i did enjoy them and i felt a sort of accomplishment./3 I really thought that i could not possibly understand those books but i did and enjoyed it./3 I learned that i shouldn't judge prematurely but if i want to judge anything i should have total knowledge./3

Having a written record affords the student and the teacher the opportunity of looking back and rediscovering themselves through their respective reactions: hers to the course, his to her reactions. It was not only O who found the "right way of writing"; I did, too. As I reflected I found out what I was looking for in the student's responses as well as in my own. My comments, more than my intentions, made my expectations for the journal clearer, both to the student and to me. O's recent entries evidence her focusing on ideas and her recognition of the necessity to share; to give as well as to take. She realizes the obstacle to learning

that is prejudgment; and "total knowledge" may be another way of expressing "total [literary] experience" that cannot occur if literature is judged prematurely.

O's 22nd entry expressed joy at the class' decision to read The Great Gatsby. Preceding our initial discussion of the novel O wrote her first response to it. My comments were encouraging, and her response, though brief, again evidenced her desire to go beyond the "main idea."

The Great Gatsby to me is like the narration of a dream that one had./5 I guess in a way he thought about Daisy all these years was in reality a dream./5 And when he woke up, the dream ended and this was unfortunately when he died./5 The book doesn't tell you whether he realizes that Daisy was so corruptible./5 But i think the Fitzgerald suggests

[Interesting. Perhaps, as I've said, that's what life is all about.]

[Ironic the way you wrote this--how terrific--how insightful--that's what it's all about, isn't it?]

[Then let's keep dreaming; and when we lose (can that be) one dream, find another fast, fast, fast!]

it toward the end./5

O's final entry before my second reading of her journal, and her third to Ellison's Invisible Man, exposes the learning process as it regards the interaction between a reader and a text. Because it was written in response to class discussion all the statements are coded 2 or 3 except for two category 1 statements.

> Today in class we talked a little about surrealism and how it relates to the novel./3 Surrealism is two things you wouldn't ordinarily put together/2 In the Invisible Man some scenes are outrageous, but the only thing that is important is whether it happened that way to the writer./2 I find that some fantasies run through the book./3 The book is all about the Invisibility of the Black civilization./3 The Black Identity crisis./3 Invisibility does not mean not being heard, or seen, but by not being recognized./3 This point is made throughout the story./3 At the end of the book the invisible man comes to a realization and comes out of hibernation and into the social class of responsibility./2 He wasn't too sure if it was the right thing to do but had to try--/2 but tried it with his grandfather's words./2 This book is filled with social disorders and discrepancies./3 When reading this book I really looked down on how people (mostly white) could be so cruel./3 Many books have opened my eyes to society and this one shall be added to that list./3 During the past years and centuries you can see how cruel people were and still are./3 People are generally selfish either in big or small amounts./3 They thrive on power and once have power need more./3 They will never be satisfied./3 If people would just let good emotions flow they would find that they need peoples love more than the love of power or money./3 The person who wrote the root of money is evil is correct./3 I sincerely hope people will change./3 I'm not saying all people are like this but we wouldn't have all these problems in the country if there wasn't such a large majority present and in

power./3 One thing that was said in class that really stuck in my mind was when Prof. Kay said that Hank Aaron is an invisible man when he struck 716 home run./3 In the papers it was said to be a credit to his race./2 It's almost like he had to prove himself to people of what he is./3 But he is truly an invisible man./3 ----- said this statement was contradictory./2 But on the contrary it held to be so true./3 This is what Ellison was pointing out in his book./3 He was trying to free himself of identities that others have chosen/3 But it was funny cause all these people were telling him of what to be when there wasn't one character in the book who knows who he is./3 In order for the black to survive you are, so to speak, destined to live a double life./3 I wonder though if he really felt he (Invisible man) was somebody to begin with./3 I mean maybe before he thought of being invisible he was a very invertid person./3 This plus society reactions to black people might conclude such a hibernation of that of the Invisible Man./3 To him it probably would be the last resort to an almost--Pity Survival, where you can be satisfied by hiding from your problems./3 This of course is easy to do/3 I sometimes do it myself but I am not truely satisfied with myself at all./1 I think this might of entered his mind a little, plus his grandfather's words./3 I wonder how the story would be if it were of a white man in a totally black environment./3 I don't think it would be the same./3 In a sense, the white man would probably win at the end./3 I really thought this book was worth reading./3 Some of his emotions I could really relate to even being white./3 But i think that there has to be a way other than treachery in order for a person to survive./3 But then again i can never say that i have felt a strong prejudice being placed on me./1 we as the defeated come to lose the symbols of the conquerors./2 This line was in the book and made me think alot about it./3 But when he talks of this feeling it is really love at all he is talking about./3 I'm not sure yet./3

O's entry begins with a summary of class discussion, followed by her own reactions to it. She seems to be using her journal to help her better understand both the discussion and beyond that, the social

implications of the novel today. Then she returns to points raised in class and responds to them. From there she discusses her own identification with Ellison's protagonist, projects a reversal of roles between blacks and whites, seeks identification again with the main character, and concludes with questioning.

"When reading this book," O writes, "I really looked down on how people (mostly white) could be so cruel. Many books have opened my eyes to society and this one shall be added to that list." Her next entry, 29, an analysis of which began this part, was a reaction to the total course experience and concluded with the following line: "I learned so much and my ideas on life and other people have changed because i know more." Apparently, the extent of her learning depends on the extent of her exploration beyond the "main idea of what is going on."

During the period of my final reading of O's journal, April 19 through May 3, only three regularly scheduled classes were held. Two books were read and discussed during that period. (Table 19.)

The table suggests O's involvement with the work during that final period. Further, she was not absent during this time, nor for the five class meetings after May 3. Her first entry for this period is 29, which introduced this part. That entry and entry 1

Table 19

Before and After First and Second Journal Readings:

Class 1-O

	H	C	1	2	3	4	5	6	TS	7
Before Teacher Reading	7	8	2	26	24	12	42	2	108	None
After First Reading Mar. 14	6	7	3	27	87	5	39	6	167	None
After Second Reading Apr. 19	5	2	7	6	33	1	19	5	71	None

provided a context within which O's journal was analyzed. I will examine those questions raised by both entries with regard to what her journal has revealed to this point. Both entries are reproduced here.

> ENTRY 29. I also got my journal back and was glad about the results./3 I'm glad that my journal is no longer and exercise but a learning tool./3 I found myself looking back a couple of times to read over the comments./3 I learned from those comments. /3 They really add to this journal./3 It's almost as if a conversion is going on when you read it./3 In the beginning I must admit it really was a pressure for me to write the journal but now i enjoy it./3 Some of my thoughts on life etc. have never been accepted by people/1 and when i write them down it makes me feel better./3 I'm still in search for myself/1 and I really find that this class will really help me a little faster./3 I guess I've learned to interpret the philosophies and inner meanings of some of the books we've read to my own./3 I never thought I would get so much

> out of an English class./3 Usually your attitude is well English all you do is read and get the main idea of what is going on./3 But this is the first--no kiding--English class that I truly got something more out of it./3 I just wish that other English (or even any other subject) classes can be instructed or taught the way ours is./3 I learned so much and my ideas on life and other people have changed because i know more./3 Thank you./3

and,

> ENTRY 1. i can say that this class to me will be a total experience in literature./3 And i think i will learn much more without the pressures of having tests and exams./3 This way you really want to devote yourself to appreciate literature./3 And it looks like if your having trouble trying to interpret all author's writing, the class will help you out./3

Entry 29 raises the first three major questions addressed by this project: 1) What are the procedures to be used by students keeping journals in a literature course?; 2) What does the content of journals reveal about a student's reactions to literature?; 3) What does the content of journals reveal about student needs in a community college literature course?

Major question 1 itself divides into three areas: 1) O's procedure in keeping her journal; 3) content of her entries; 3) content of my comments.

1) O's procedure in keeping her journal. For the first three weeks of the semester O did not keep the journal regularly, writing only one home entry. However, except for the two days she was absent and for two holidays, O wrote class entries. During the latter part of the first half of the semester and during the

second semester half, her schedule of entries was more regular.

2) The content of O's entries. During the first part of the first semester half, O's entries were primarily critical of the class; due, perhaps, in part, because she expected class discussion to be not only a substitute for her own reading of the literature, but to provide answers for her. When the class experience did not fulfill her expectations she reacted with bitterness. During the second three weeks of the first semester half, and during the remainder of the semester, O's class entries dealt with ideas and personal viewpoints as she depended more on herself and less on the class. Contrasting an early class entry, 3, with a later one, 28, or an early home entry, 14, with a later one, 24, illustrates the "conversion" O wrote had occurred.

3) The content of my comments. I think O learned that my comments were intended to help her explore beyond the "main idea." Her later entries reveal this; they evidence her involvement with the literature as they show her focusing on ideas and interacting in her journal with others, with me, and with the literature.

Major question 2 asks, What does the content of journals reveal about a student's reactions to literature? O's "total [literary] experience" may be attained

if she is allowed to "appreciate literature." As suggested earlier, to "appreciate literature" means, in part, being given the opportunity to compare a work to the way she thinks; that is, being given the opportunity to explore beyond the "main idea of what is going on," without fear of rejection. It means also, reflecting upon one's ideas, as in a journal, and sharing with others, as in a classroom. While there is no right or wrong way to interpret literature, O came to realize that her experience with a work is enhanced, sharpened, through verbal and written interchange with herself and with others.

Major question 3 asks, What does the content of journals reveal about student needs in a community college literature course? O's journal reveals the following needs: to be able to learn without the limitations inherent in tests and examinations; that is, to be allowed to appreciate literature so that there may be a total literary experience; to be able to participate in open class discussion where shared reactions may broaden one's own awareness and understanding of literature; that is, to go beyond the "main idea"; to be able to examine freely the student-teacher relationship through the journal dialogue, and finally, the need to explore oneself through writing and talking about literature.

In O's first entry she expressed that she sought in literature insights into living that she overlooked before. This complements her desire to compare a work to the way she thinks because both concern her stance toward literature and both are expressions of "relating" to a work. That her expectations were fulfilled is evident in her statements to that effect, as well as in her entries themselves. In her 29th entry O wrote: "I guess I've learned how to interpret the philosophies and inner meanings of some of the books we've read to my own." In an early response, to The Scarlet Letter, O found that the novel explored the affect any community may have on one of its members. In a later entry, reacting to Biff Loman in Death of a Salesman, she wrote: "I personally feel that for some people it might take their whole life time to find themselves. I know I'm still searching." And reacting to Gail Parent's Sheila Levine is Dead and Living in New York, O's 30th entry, she wrote:

> I started reading Sheila Levine today/4 and found that i couldn't put it down./5 Its not written in the English of long ago--Like the Scarlet Letter but of modern today English./5 I really am enjoying it because i guess i can relate to some of the events that has happened to her./6 And the way the book itself is written is histerical./5 She's always putting in alot of afterthoughts after saying something./5 Now you wouldn't find that in old classics writing of books./5 And the way she describes New York to me is perfect./6 Even though she is comical about some of it in reality its true./6 Sometimes when people joke about things alot, they're really crying out on the inside./5

> But maybe that could just end up in kidding yourself./5 I was gonna say could all this be tied in with "reality."/5 Even though it might touch the story a little, i think reality is recognized by Sheila/5 and she's not dreaming to the extent that Gatsby did./5 It's funny how one word reality can be the topic of alot of books we read./5

After reacting to the style, O states her identification with the work recalling a thought expressed with regard to Emerson's "The American Scholar": "i compared it to the way i think." She is, to paraphrase her own words, interpreting the inner meanings of the works she is reading to herself; that is, within the context of the person she is. Her delight in her role as student and reader is evident in the concluding passage in entry 30.

> Now you can see I never got so much out of an English class before this./1 I really couldn't see myself sitting here talking and comparing books meanings./1 I'm really proud of myself./1 I think it was because even though i read a book, I really just read it and didn't appreciate it./1 All my English classes before put pressure on you, so that no appreciation of the book could be taken in./1 But i can truly say that this class because of the methods Alan uses for teaching should be called "English Appreciation for learning."/1

The preceding passages provide a context for a subsequent entry which concludes this part and sums up O's reactions to the course.

> No class today so I had time to finish the book before monday./2 I wish we did have a class because it's my only class on Friday and i look forward to it./3 I'm always learning in that class and it makes me feel healthier in some way./3

O's journal was one of several analyzed to determine the effect of the student journal as a teaching and learning tool. The journals revealed profound human needs and enlightened me to attitudes, both personal and educational, that otherwise would have remained hidden behind the mask of the public classroom and trapped in the web spun by lecture, analysis, and the controlled feedback of the short answer quiz. I now realize that there are many silent students, few passive ones. Though most students attempt to express needs, the success of their attempts and the depths of their expressions are determined by the channel of communication. Many are silent because the public nature of the classroom inhibits their sharing. Even the student-teacher conference does not commend itself to the intimacy a student may require.

The journal, however, is one channel of communication which offers, without interruption, a solitude that can satisfy the student's needs to explore his ideas privately and freely; to test his responses; to put words to feelings--and to take them all back if he desires. For the student who is silent in class the journal provides a medium through which he might hear himself. When he wants to share, he has private access to his teacher, who will keep confidential what he wishes to reveal. Even the extroverted student requires occasion for quiet deliberation. Also, it is a valuable instrument for the student who desires to continue expressing in his journal thoughts he did not have time to finish in class: "It's like saying all you want on paper, if you didn't think of it in class." The journal, then, can be used to satisfy various needs.

Understanding the Student's Class Behavior

Because the journal is used, in part, as a medium to respond to the class experience its entries reveal a variety of needs and attitudes toward participating in this experience. No student's attitude ought to be a mystery to his teacher if the teacher desires to explore with him the vital issues of his life dramatized in imaginative writing. Without some knowledge of the student's attitude toward the subject the teacher cannot teach effectively because he does not know what to reach for. The journal is one valuable source for this knowledge because it is a place where attitudes may be safely expressed and where the teacher may consider them in varying contexts and with perspective.

Quietness or talkativeness in class may result from needs not discernible in the schoolroom or in conference, even by a perceptive teacher. The teacher may suspect motives for a student's silence or talkativeness, for his isolation or gregariousness. In the journal, motives are revealed, affirming the student's trust in the confidentiality of the journal, and thus, trust in the teacher. The following entry shows a student explaining her silence in class and it demonstrates confidence in the journal.

> It will take me some time before I get over my nervousness. I guess I'm really self-conscious in a room occupied mostly by "men"? I think I have to try harder to prove myself . . . all my life I have been following the crowd, and never expressing my own ideas, and finally I decided I should try, and I did. I was scared the first time, but now I'm almost a new me. It still takes me quite a long time to talk, and express ideas in class, but sooner or later I'll do it . . . I finally learned that my ideas and opinions are just as good as anyone else's, and today Prof. Kay said that again. Your opinions and ideas aren't wrong for you. I just have to make it sink in deeper, and really believe it. I'm honestly trying to break out of my shell . . . I think it's working, slowly, but it's working.

In this entry the student expresses her lack of self-confidence, her need for acceptance, and her fear of rejection. Such acknowledgement may help the teacher deal more effectively with students' class work because he now has reasons for students' behavior. Without the journal to disclose whey they are unwilling to share in class, the students are known not as individuals, but by the category in which the current pedagogical jargon places them: passive, slow, perhaps even, non-reader.

The journal offers the quiet student a place where he can share, yet remain quiet. It is not finally, the teacher's job to probe why a student needs to be private in class. It is his job to offer a means by which such a student might express himself. The journal can be such a medium.

The journal also reveals why students are active participants in class discussion. There are those who wish to share their reaction to a work to attain feedback which will increase their own understanding: "I brought up (in class discussion today) how emerson could sweep my mind away as I could relate so greatly to him. Other times he doesn't relate at all." Others share because in their own expressions they shape an understanding of the work: "One finds the story more real or more tangible when participating."

The journal offers insight into this area of class participation and its significance is in what it implies for teaching strategies. For example, there are students who do not necessarily want to respond to direct questions asked by the teacher but would rather share their impressions of a work. In some classes discussion ought to evolve out of these impressions for they often bare a work's various levels

of meaning.

In the following passage a student reports on a classmate's comment:

> "Emerson doesn't really tell us anything new. What he does is bring out the things we haven't thought of." Said -----, while we were having a class discussion on Emerson's self-reliance. I find it hard to understand Emerson but from the little I understand I can surely back up -----'s statement.

I had asked the class: "What is your reaction to Emerson's "Self-Reliance?" The student who spoke did not respond with an interpretation, rather, he expressed a general effect the essay left on him. He reacted to the work within the context of his own past experience and added dimension to class discussion of the work as shown in his classmate's written reaction to what he said.

The teacher's attitude toward his students and his presentation of material often determine the extent to which a student will participate in class discussion. Too often, however, the teacher is never made aware of the affect his attitude and presentation have on student behavior in class. The journal forces this awareness upon you.

> It is a new experience for me, listening to our teacher explaining passionate attention. I have never considered the fact, that ones emotions, and ones mind could be so involved in an academic subject. Usually, I try to please my teacher, and give him or her that, that is expected, on a literal basis. The suggestion, that the you, in class is most important certainly stimulates my attention. For I would like to awaken those things in me that probably has been dormant, because the proper stimulus wasn't present.

The journal is a learning tool for the teacher as well as for the student. It gives the teacher insight into understanding students' class behavior as well as gives the student an opportunity of examining his own, and others, conduct in the classroom.

The Students' Reactions To The Teacher

The journal is often a forum for student reactions to the teacher's behavior. These are reactions that might otherwise remain secret if the journal did not encourage them.

It is more often than not the disgruntled student who expresses his attitude regarding the teacher's behavior in class and who will not hesitate to use the classroom as a place to flaunt his displeasure. Too often, however, the reason for his disapproval is not verbalized; rather it is a grunt, a sneer, an angrily turned page, excessive lateness, or absence. And the teacher is never made aware of what this student regards with disfavor. The journal provides the unhappy student, as well as the satisfied one, a place to make known his state of mind, and the teacher is responsible for creating an atmosphere of trust which allows such comments to come out in the journal. It must be safe to be who you want to be in your journal. The retributive teacher will find that his students' journals will contain few entries and the result is that neither the student nor the teacher will learn. Without learning there is no growth. Because the journal encourages responses to teaching it is, again, a learning tool for the teacher.

Students who were keenly watchful of my methods and commented on them in their journals alerted me to my strengths and weaknesses, both as a teacher and as a respondent in their journals. Their observations promoted my own growth and, at the same time, made them more aware of the teaching situation. The following passage, written early in the semester, refers to my class behavior.

> . . . All you do is ask us to read, nothing else. The least the students could do is comment on what they have read. You should "keep questioning" the shy students to get them to respond. It's boring if the same people speak all the time. It's more interesting if different peoples viewpoints are expressed--like you said. I can imagine how you feel when half the class doesn't read what was assigned. That's not asking too much.

This student made me aware, through her journal, of her recognition of the responsibility of each student to the group so that there is a community of sharing. She also points out that I was not fully meeting my responsibility of encouraging broader participation. As I kept questioning the shy students more of them began to join in class discussion.

The following passage reflects the student's attitude toward me as a respondent in her journal.

> I agree with most of your comments but it did bring me down a little to see that i was doing it wrong. But on some entries your giving me suggestions of what to write or explain. If they didn't seem important to me at the time or occurred to me it would be thn, as if you were telling me the subject and topic to write on. I'll try better to explicate my thoughts. Some suggestions gave me a way I can put down better entries.

Later in the semester the same student wrote:

> In coming back to the writing of a journal I feel that it will be a different technique of learning and i found out that i did not find the write way of writing till you checked it out. I found after I read the entries I made in the very beginning that I am simply summarizing what I have read of the ideas I had . . .

Here, the journal made me aware of the student's perception of me as a respondent in her journal. Thought I intended only to stimulate further thought with my comments, the student interpreted those written remarks as ones "giving (her) suggestions of what do write or explain." This taught me to phrase my comments so that

students did not think I was trying to write their journals for them, but only responding to what they wrote. The second passage, written later in the semester, reveals that I had succeeded in clarifying for her the intent of my responses. At the same time, it shows the student's increased awareness of the teacher's role.

On one hand, students praised me in their journals for my ability to explain "even the most difficult points so they're readily understood." On the other hand, they chided me when I showed displeasure when they did not react to a work as I thought they would. They suggested that I be flexible and adjust my methods to meet the needs of a particular class. Early in the semester, during a period when we were discussing Emerson's essays, a student wrote:

> You do not seem to have fully developed the "radar" that is so important to a teacher. If you had, you would've seen the tell-tale signs of restlessness last Tuesday. Sometimes, Alan, the enthusiasm leaves the class and embodies itself in you. The excitement, then, is coming from you, my friend, not from the literature. This is something you are going to have to learn to detect, for if you do not, you are going to disappoint yourself continually . . . You are going to have to make yourself more aware of the changing attitudes of the students . . . .

Often, the teacher does not detect the reasons for students' discontentedness in class, especially if the teach is blinded by his own needs. The journal opens his eyes and helps him develop the "radar" he requires if he wants responsive students.

The next passage, from a later entry in the same student's journal, shows that I have learned from this student.

> You know you get better every day. What I mean is, you don't seem to be quite as disgusted as you were there for a while . . . There have been times when you seemed to be, not only indifferent, but hostile . . . if someone did not like the selection, you reacted in a way that seemed to say "How can you be so dumb." . . . some

> classes are not going to be receptive to your way of teaching. Sometimes, a change is in order. Not every group is going to adjust to you, so you must be flexible enought to adjust to them. Today you showed an ability to do just that. In all the time I've been in this school, I've rarely seen a teacher take such command as you did today.

Feedback for the teacher is essential. His methods never stale as long as they are under the watchful eyes of his students. In average class situations students never care to look and the teacher never cares to ask. The journal itself is the teacher's way of asking his students to care.

Students' Reactions to Literary Study

The journal is used primarily as a medium to respond to the literature and reveals attitudes regarding literary study.

Self-exploration

The journal showed that for some students imaginative writing helps in their search for selfhood and exhibits how, as they examine the literature, they discover characters with whom they identify, and events and themes to which they find parallels in their own lives. In their journals, students explore these relationships beyond what they might reveal in the public classroom and thus give the teacher insight into why they respond as they do. Some students identify confusions listening to Willy Loman and Holden Caulfield; clarify conflicts living with Sheila Levine, and find direction toward resolution of conflicts in Emerson, Whitman, and Ellison. I can contrast a statement from a student's early entry: "Sometimes I get lost among myself and run and run to find I don't know what," with a later entry:

> I related to Holden and the confusion within himself. I think we all want as little change in life as possible. were always afraid of the unknown because of the uncertainty it brings . . . I don't think Holden is crazy because the most complicated thing in life is yourself and your own mind who when no longer produces the answers to your questions errupts like a volcano.

The latter entry evidences how a literary work has helped the student identify his own confusions and clarify his conflicts. For others, the literature creates disturbances, but in doing so, extends their awareness by showing them they are not alone in their struggles.

> Willy, although he seemed very crazy he was not unusual because he was running after something that almost everyone in this country runs after and that is success and everything that goes with success . . . The individual, Willy is at peace because he killed himself. But the symbol, Willy will never die.

For yet others, the literature strengthens their own self-image.

> I can identify with Sheila because we had the same upbringing. Only I'm luckier. Because I am younger than her, and grew up in the 60's & 70's I now have the choice. I am now the "Liberated Woman." I can be a "career girl" if I want. No questions asked.

The need to identify oneself is not a revelation. But the journal, unlike the customary classroom and the regulated writing assignment, gives this need a chance to surface; and in so doing, allows the student the opportunity to explore what before he could not find words or opportunity to express; to share his need with others, if he desires; to seek in the human experiences depicted in literature ways in which others have sought self-realization and so take direction or comfort from them; to seek confirmation of his own identity. These opportunities, inherent in the journal experience, affirm an implication of the study of literature: engagement with imaginative writing may not ease our burdens, but literature shares with us the

knowledge that we are not alone. Such affirmation might not have been revealed were it not for the journal. Such implication is essential to personal growth, which itself is a process of discovery and rediscovery. The journal is a tool for exploration and therefore with it we may discover something new about ourselves and our world: "I tried to think of all the Loman Families I know & it was not hard/ Maybe there is a little bit of Loman in every family." More often we rediscover: "I have just begun to love myself & rely on myself, to have pride & have taste of my own without trying to adopt someone else/ Emerson gives me inspiration." The discoveries broaden our vision; the rediscoveries strengthen our resolve and emphasize our humanity.

Literary Preferences and Biases

As students write freely in their journals of their attitudes toward the teacher, themselves, and others, the teacher learns what satisfies them about the readings and what does not; what interests them and what bores them. Responses to the reading list have implications for curriculum organization. Selections should be mutually agreed upon and not solely determined by either student or teacher. The teacher contributes to the selection process his background and experience as a reader. This allows him to introduce the students to both contemporary and non-contemporary writers and books which may relate to their lives but which they might not have read on their own. They may, then, for example, find they can identify with characters in books written in the "English of long ago," as they can in contemporary literature; and they may learn not to judge the value of a book on the basis of its date of composition. The student con-

tributes his background, experience, and needs, equally important to the selection process.

Personal Enrichment and Interpretive Development

The students' attitude toward the literature changed as the semester moved forward. I teach that the study of literature does not take place outside the context of human values;[1] that "the literary work exists in the live circuit set up between the reader and the text."[2] The journals revealed that the students were taking a more personal stance toward the literature and were more interpretive in their responses. Without the free-response journal, such movement might not have been detected and so personal and interpretive growth would have been unknown, leaving the teacher with no evidence that that change had occurred.

Following is part of an early entry, dated March 7, in which the student responded to a poem by Whitman.

> I Hear America Singing
> W.W./4
> He was talking about the average American singing about being happy doing the things they do because they are in America and able to do it./4 He uses average people like carpenters, boatmen, etc. and says they take care of their work and don't take from anyone else./4

This response contrast with the next passage from a later entry by the same student, a response to The Catcher in the Rye.

> I liked this book yet I didn't/5 I like it because it was interesting and sometimes funny but it annoyed the hell out of me too./5 . . . I think Holden himself was a phony./5 He kept on trying to be older than he was and he didn't like it when people thought he looked the age he was despite his grey hair . . .

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[1]Richard L. McGuire, Passionate Attention: An Introduction to Literary Study, New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1973, 4.

[2]Louise M. Rosenblatt, Literature as Exploration, New York: Noble and Noble, Inc., 1968, 25.

The preceding entries show that students may compare and contrast early and late responses: what and how they wrote about the literature they had read and were reading. The journal offered continuity to their responses and perhaps encouraged them to relate and integrate ideas, as they did when comparing writers.

> In every book I have read there was something in it that I have learned and although some of the ideas expressed in these books were not new to me I still feel I learned something from the way they were presented. Emerson for instance has strengthened my convictions on my ability to create and to compete. Richar Bach's stresses accomplishment through endeavor. Hwathorne, Melville, Miller portray the conflicts of good and evil and what happens when two different ideologies conflict with each other. Sallenger themes on growing up can also be found in Ellison's novel and also in the Seagull. Identity and how it is found is told by Ellison, Douglass Whitman and F. S. Fitzgerald.

Because the journal required regular, almost daily writing, it encouraged self-responsibility, closer reading, and an attentiveness to class discussion, all of which might not have been otherwise attained had not the responsibility for learning been passed to the student. It does not create the pressures brought about by tests and examinations because the impetus for writing is the student's own reactions, and not the teacher's, as reflected in his examination questions. The journal, then, would be a primary learning tool in a literature course.

To use the journal as a tool in a literature course, the teacher must seek to respond to the literary reaction and not to the person. He must guide the student from personal reflection to personal responses to the literature and not guide him back into himself. The journal is an effective tool for steering the student through an understanding of the literature, and may be effective as well in

helping him better understand himself. The teacher's role, however, is to focus on the literature and on the literary response.

Having a written record affords not only the student, but the teacher as well, an opportunity of looking back and rediscovering himself through his reactions. As I reflected I found my strengths and weaknesses as a respondent. To be willing to share in the journal means that the student trust the teacher. To establish and maintain this trust, the teacher's comments must show understanding and acceptance of what the student has written. The teacher should not judge the "rightness" or "wrongness" of an interpretation, or an expression of feeling; or determine the worth of the student's response. He wants to encourage response, not inhibit it. If the student brings nothing to the work, or thinks that he has nothing to bring, his response will be superficial and brief. It is the teacher's job to make the student aware that he has much to offer; that it is what he brings to the work as much as what the work brings to him that creates the literary experience.

Though I recognized early that some students' knowledge of the mechanics of writing was poor, in such areas as spelling, syntax, diction, and punctuation, I did not interfere with their freedom to respond, which would have occurred had I corrected their writing. However, the journal could be used successfully in conjunction with analytical papers, and perhaps ought to be because it is important that the student be acquainted with more than one way of writing about literature. The content of such papers could be derived from the journals themselves: first the spontaneous expression, then the reflective paper where the mechanics of writing are more carefully

attended to.

I did not collect journals until two and one-half weeks of the semester had passed so that the students would have time to familiarize themselves with the course, my teaching, and with their own journals. I learned that journals should be read earlier so that I might identify personal needs which might interfere with a student's work in the course. After identifying the needs I might then have been able to find ways for the student to cope with these needs through the literature. For example, one student, whose journal I read for the first time nearly three weeks after the term began, wrote in his first entry: "At times I am shy but I will try to do my very best." Though I might not have been successful in encouraging him to participate in class, I might have, by directing him to passages in Emerson's journals, revealed the value of his own journal as an instrument for self-expression. This might have prevented the series of brief entries he wrote during the first half of the semester, which barely touched the relationship between himself and the literature.

> Today I read the "American Scholar" This is what I got out of reading this essay. Mr. Emerson seems to be making a speech, as he addresses The President and Gentlemen. What I got out of this reading A) Man is anything that he wants to be. B) A man who doesn't know about the subject of which he is reading he is more or less a bookworm, as far as Ralph Emerson is concern. C) According to Emerson an Scholar is more or less a person who really knows his stuff.

Journal entries suggested that in preparing my syllabus I should find in literature other characters such as Willy Loman, Sheila Levine, and Ellison's invisible man, with whom students readily identified, though not at the expense of ignoring all non-contemporary

writing. A complementary implication would be to encourage student selection of literary works for the syllabus. That students found relationships between Frederick Douglass and Ralph Ellison, among others, suggests that readings need not be chronologically arranged. A thematic relationship is not the only reason for scheduling the readings other than in the order in which they were written, beginning with the earliest. One student wrote:

> As mathematics begins with 1+1=2 rather than the guadratic formula, so also should literature begin. Would it not be better to present the students initially, with a selection readily understood, whereby through their interpretation, you as a teacher could better evaluate them and determine, slowly, just how deep their abilities to interpret and their understanding goes? Is it not far better to begin a literature course with what the students would definitely be able to understand, rather than with something they might possibly be unable to understand? For the student who does not have a developed ability in this area, a beginning such as this (Emerson) could, no doubt, produce a defeatist attitude that might carry through the entire course.

Students expressed desire for biographical, historical, and critical backgrounds so that there is more than one context within which they may examine a work, and so extend their knowledge and appreciation of it: "I think we should discuss more his (Emerson's) lifestyle, friends, neighbors and family to get a more objective view of the man, which plays an important part in his writing." The curriculum ought to provide for such study, not, however, as a substitute for personal engagement and should, then, follow the reading of the work rather than precede it. The teacher should provide a supplementary reading list of biographical, historical, and critical works to which students may refer if they desire to examine the literature in one or more of these contexts. Also, class time should be made available for open discussion of this material.

The idea behind the categories used in my analysis was to find a means of identifying the variety of journal responses to what I assumed constituted the total literary experience: reading, writing, discussing. I learned that students shared my assumption as they expressed a desire to engage in all three pursuits, in part, because each was necessary to the process of literary exploration. "The involvement (with literature)," one student wrote, "took on a greater dimension and demanded more of the individual which in essence caused me to receive more from the course, through direct reading, writing and class participation."

Another student wrote of two components of the literary experience, writing and reading:

> Some of my thoughts on life, etc. have never been accepted by people and when i write them down it makes me feel better . . . I guess I've learned to interpret the philosophies and inner meanings of the books we've read to my own.

In a later entry, this same student wrote of the third component, discussing:

> . . . you see I never got so much out of an English class before this. I really couldn't see myself sitting here talking and comparing books meaning. I'm really proud of myself . . . This class because of the methods Alan uses for teaching should be called "English Appreciation for learning."

Even though many students were not verbal in class, and limited their participation to listening rather than to talking and listening, their entries reflected that class discussion, because it was a sharing, was an integral part of their literary experience: "Class discussion helped me a great deal for sometimes I completely forget some passages of great importance."

Finally, the study suggests implications for further work with journals in the two-year college. An examination of the journal might offer new perspectives on a whole series of claims about the two-year college student. For example, such a study might propose reconsideration of the assertion that the community college student is less self-motivated than his four-year counterpart;[1] or more insecure and in constant need of the teacher's recognition of his worth.[2] Also, the journal might support the claim that the two-year college student needs a place where he can realistically test his personal values.[3] Or, study might be made of the implications of the journal as a teaching and learning tool within the context of the National Council of Teachers of English "Guidelines for Junior College Teacher Training Programs,"[4] or within a variety of educational contexts.

Because the journal affords the teacher and the student the opportunity to examine the literary experience in process, it is a valuable instrument for developing teaching skills and students' awareness of the nature of their response to literature, to themselves and to their world.

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[1]Charles R. Monroe, Profile of the Community College, London: Jossey-Bass, Inc., 1972, 199.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Joseph B. Cook, Marvin A. Hoss, and Robert Vargas, Search for Independence: Orientation for the Junior College Student, Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1968, 84.

[4]Gregory Cowan, "Guidelines for Junior College English Teacher Training Programs," College Composition and Communication, Oct., 1971, xxii:3, 303-313.